

From: Herbert Schwaab <HerbertSchwaab@YAHOO.DE>
Subject: Re: another naive question -- on beauty

I find the beautiful an important concept in thinking about film, although I don't know exactly how the concept is used in English. I refer to the beautiful in connection with Cavell's interpretation with Kantian aesthetics, which I find very interesting as a means to understand the way we talk about movies or artworks we like. Kant says, that whenever we find something beautiful, meaning more than just agreeable for 'me', we feel compelled to convince others to find it beautiful too, although it is still a subjective feeling and judgement that cannot be shared with others. We do this although we know better. (see "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy" in Cavell's "Must We Mean What We Say" and §7 and 8 of Kant's Critique of Judgement). For Cavell, there are close links between Kant and everyday language philosophy, treating the way we are used to talk about things as facts of our life forms. But Cavell takes the notion further, aligning, as I understand it, the beautiful with the entertaining (in his readings of classical Hollywood comedies), feeling the same urge to tell others that something was beautiful or entertaining or simply good.

I am not really sure about this, but I think that I am very often inclined to claim that I find a film beautiful the same way I find it entertaining or good, but the term beautiful would then mean, that I wasn't able to find the film only beautiful for me, so I have to address myself to others and try to convince them of the qualities of a film (for the same reasons I get angry, really angry about films I don't find beautiful or entertaining or find simply wrong). I like Kant's concept of the beautiful also for a pragmatic or functional reason: Although I am supposed to be a media scholar I don't think its is useful to be indifferent (or objective) towards films.

Therefore I am very interested in this discussion and I will repeat the question raised here: Does the concept of the beautiful mean that something is more than just good for me, does it mean that we will have to go beyond the limits of our subjectivity in order to try to find a common ground for our subjective feelings about a film? (Which also means that we expose ourselves to others).

From: Robert Sinnerbrink <robert.sinnerbrink@MQ.EDU.AU>
Subject: Re: another naive question -- on beauty

Dear Mike,

Not at all stale! Beauty is making a much-awaited comeback in aesthetics. I like Wendy Steiner's The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in an Age of Fundamentalism, which is wonderfully thoughtful and still very timely, in my view.

From: Anne Schillmoller <aschillm@SCU.EDU.AU>
Subject: Re: another naive question -- on beauty

Umberto Eco explores the notion of beauty in 'On Beauty: A History of a Western Idea' (Secker & Warburg, London, 2004). Not about cinema per se, although there is a chapter on The Beauty of the Media. A beautiful book with lots of beautiful images!

From: Greg Tuck <Greg.Tuck@UWE.AC.UK>
Subject: Re: another naive question -- on beauty

Steven Shaviro puts beauty centre stage in his book Without Criteria - highly recommended

From: Epiphanie Bloom <epiphaniebloom@GMAIL.COM>
Subject: Re: another naive question -- on beauty

For anyone who's interested in a notion of beauty that goes beyond, as Henry put it, 'the unblemished and immaculate', I suggest the Japanese concept of 'wabi-sabi' - a great little introduction can be found here:

http://books.google.com.au/books?id=x67sW5RAUC4C&pg=PA206&lpg=PA206&dq=wabi-sabi+rob+brezny&source=bl&ots=ZFMMy29lx&sig=xHiLtWm1VRH_OqIQw2CWd7tVD9s&hl=en&ei=RteFTZr-J4rEvQOL2bG9CA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBYQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false

It's not so much Lady Gaga's voice that I find beautiful as much as some of the visuals (fashion, music videos, etc) associated with it. Words I would associate with her voice are playful, bold, and a bit rough around the edges. Then there's Robyn, whose visual aesthetic doesn't strike a chord with me, but has a voice so incredibly beautiful that it can move me to tears. (These days she has a habit of putting heart-breaking lyrics to uplifting dance music, which I also find beautiful in its postmodernism!)

Btw, I have noticed that when a reviewer uses the word 'gritty' to describe a film, it's usually in a complimentary review.

From: Alan Fair <A.Fair@MMU.AC.UK>
Subject: Re: FILM-PHILOSOPHY beauty

Hello all,

Oh dear, don't lets get started on music, it's bad enough with the cinema. I have just spent the weekend making a lecture on, what turned out to be the first 7 minutes of 'Histoire(s) Du Cinema'. I assume that Godard was seeking some kind of answer to the question of the relation between beauty and aesthetics, hence a particular choice of sounds to accompany the images.

Just for the record, sometimes a piece of music can be beautiful because of one's sense of the striving of the artist, a particular solo by Parker, the amazing recording of John Handy's group at Monterey (1967?) etc. What I do sense is that, in relation to my last mail, that the marriage of music and images is one made in heaven, especially in relation to Herrmann's music and the image of Novak in Hitchcock's film. There you go..the cinema can be beautiful but not as a fetish but rather as our realisation of the work involved.

Peace
Alan

From: "Frank, Michael" <MFRANK@BENTLEY.EDU>
Subject: Re: FILM-PHILOSOPHY beauty

may i pick up on [or pick on] the last phrase of alan's observation: "cinema can be beautiful but not as a fetish but rather as our realization of the work involved" which seems to me to suggest a very interesting binary, between two kinds of "beauty" [whatever the hell that might be] that differ not only in their focus but in what might [i guess] be called their ontology and are thus so radically/essentially different as to be irreconcilable

one - alan's aligns it with a fetish - is presumably anchored in the unconscious and "transports" us [for lack of a better word] in some pre-conceptual way [though we may of course conceive of it after the fact] . . . i suppose the paradigmatic case here is the beautiful face, but a beautiful melody or a beautiful sunset might qualify as well

the other - derived from " one's sense of the striving of the artist" is very much a conscious matter, apparently the result of an intentional act of identification with some other

i don't doubt that both of those experiences might, in ordinary language, count as beautiful - but if that's the case, and if these are as different as they seem to me at first glance, would we not be better off having different terms for each . . . or is there some way in which we can see both of these as partaking in a single larger enterprise of the subject?

mike

From: "Shaw, Dan" <DShaw@LHUP.EDU>
Subject: Re: FILM-PHILOSOPHY beauty

Terence Malick has often been faulted for being too beautiful for his narrative subject matter...whether it be the sublime beauty of the bleak contryside in Badlands or the lush tropical jungle of Thin Red Line.

I do find some passages of his films mesmerizing...but at those times the narrative grinds to a halt (or at least loses my attention)...except in Thin Red Line, where the scenery becomes the perfect objective correlative of Witt's profound reflections, which are of the essence of the narrative.

Professor Daniel Shaw

